THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH):(a) Yes, Sir. the Ministry of External Affairs is conscious of the need to optimise expenses incurred by our Missions abroad. Against the Budget Estimate of Rs.756 crores, during the year 2001-2002, the revised expenditure is Rs.730 crores.

(b) and (c) In pursuance of the need to optimise expenses, the Ministry of External Affairs has abolished 24 posts in Missions abroad, imposed a 10% cut in the non-plan expenditure, reduced Daily Allowance (D.A.) rates by 25% for local tours by officers abroad and imposed a complete ban on purchase of new vehicles.

Release of Rebels by Myanmar

3891. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news report captioned "Myanmar snubs India fresh rebels" appearing in the Hindustan Times dated the 18th March, 2002;

(b) if so, fact thereof and Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to persuade the Myanmar Government to apprehend the freed rebels to contain transborder terrorism?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Myanmarese security forces in an operation in November 2001 in th eTamu area, reportedly apprehended a large number of Indian Insurgent Groups. It was learnt that a huge cache of arms, fake currency notes etc. were seized. India had requested through diplomatic channels that an Indian team be allowed to interrogate the insurgents who had been captured. GOI has been following up through the existing institutional mechanisms and through diplomatic channels.